

READY FOR HARVEST?

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I spoke last week about complacency. Feeling self-satisfied ... at ease ... unaware of impending danger. Let him who stands take heed in case he falls.

It is a problem we can all face. It describes Laodiceans — who believe they are wealthy and in need of nothing.

I said last week we need to check ourselves. Are we coasting? Or enthusiastic ... taking action? Or ... am I going backwards?

The responsibility is ours individually. No one else will do it for us. It's personal!

So — when you compare yourself to the last Feast — or 10 years ago — are you still growing? Or dried up?

Hebrews 5:9-14

9 And having been perfected, He (*Jesus*) became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,
10 called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”
11 **of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, *since you have become dull of hearing.* (Lukewarm)**

12 **For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.**

13 **For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.**

14 But **solid food belongs to those who are of full age, (*mature*)** that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Hebrews 6:1

1 **Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, **let us go on to perfection,** (*maturity — full grown*) **not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,****

Hebrews 6:1 (AMPLIFIED)

1 **THEREFORE LET us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine of Christ (the Messiah), advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belong to spiritual maturity.**

We should all be advancing — TO MATURITY!

According to scripture ... Jesus Himself has made provision for us.

Ephesians 4:8

8 Therefore He says:

“When **He** ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And **gave gifts to men.**”

Ephesians 4:11-13

11 **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

12 **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, for the edifying of the body of Christ,**

13 **till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;**

Until we come to a perfect man or mature man or full-grown man — Greek: Teleos.

Ephesians 4:14

14 **that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,**

No longer children (babies) ... unstable!

Ephesians 4:15-16

15 **but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—**

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Grow up ... which is not immediate.

It is not good to be just treading water — and being complacent.

We should always be moving towards maturity. It doesn't always happen ... as Hebrews Chapter 5 showed us.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

1 **And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.** (*Many translations: "mere infants"*)

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; **for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;**

3 **for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? (*Carnal — worldly ... almost unconverted*)

Paul was frustrated! They were selfish ... immature ... plain worldly.

Not unlike the Churches of God today? Finger-pointing ... claims of superiority ... splits ... poaching members ... envy ... divisions.

Jesus may supply the gifts ... but if we individually don't do our part ... take action ... WE WON'T GROW.

We need to recognise that we should be growing — moving forward.

John 15:1-8

1 **"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.**

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and **every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 **"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit;** for without Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 **By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**

We should be producing **much fruit** — which means being mature. Growing and developing ... no longer dull of hearing.

It is not about possessing much knowledge.

It is not just about swapping out Sunday ... and in with the Sabbath. Changing Xmas to the Feast. And Easter to the Passover etc.

Just replacing a few false doctrines isn't the same as being fruitful.

What are we doing? What is our produce? What can be seen? What are we doing? What are we being? If we were arrested as being Christians ... would there be enough evidence to find us guilty? *(As per quote by Billy Graham)*

Matthew 13:18-23

18 **"Therefore hear the parable of the sower:**

19 **When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it,** then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. *(They stumble across the Truth but it has no impact on them)*

20 **But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;** *(this person appears to be converted ... they receive it joyfully. They are on their way to salvation. They are standing on the edge of the Lake of Fire)*

21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and **the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.** *(I suspect this describes many of the people that are in the Church of God)*

23 But **he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**"

The purpose of sowing seed is to produce a harvest — fruit!

How are we doing? I suspect that the seed that is being choked is most common in the Church of God.

It does take time. There is a growing season as seeds grow to maturity.

Mark 4:26-29

26 And He said, "**The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground,**

27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. (*The seed grows*)

28 For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.

29 But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Mark 4:28(NASB)

28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.

There is progression. Time passes. We advance towards maturity and fruitfulness.

If it's not growing ... stunted ... choked — it can't be harvested. It won't be ready.

Luke 13:6-9

6 He also spoke this parable: "**A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.**

7 Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, "**Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?**"

8 But he answered and said to him, "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilise it.

9 **And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'** ”

Fruit is required — it's not optional! There is a time element. Adequate time is provided ... but ... if no fruit eventually — then cut it down!

You and I have had a lot of time already? Many of us have been around 30/40/50 or more years! We can't afford to be coasting.

Are we fruitful in our lives? Doers? Mature? Much more like Jesus than we were?

Active? Pressing on? Or ... at ease? Complacent?

Jesus wants us to be getting ready. Would we be ready if the harvest came soon?

Luke 12:35-40

35 **“Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; (BE ALERT!)**

36 **and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master,** when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.

37 **Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching.** Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 But know this, that if the head of the household had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

40 **Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”**

Two illustrations of being ready. The very opposite of being complacent. Nearly ready for harvest? Fruitful and mature?

How are you and I doing? (Emphasis on doing. 🤔)

Matthew 25:1-13

1 **“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.**

- 2 **Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.**
- 3 **Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,**
- 4 but **the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.**
- 5 **But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.**
- 6 “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ *(at midnight — not a convenient time)*
- 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.
- 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’
- 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’
- 10 And while they went to buy, **the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding;** and the door was shut. *(There was an opportunity. Now the time is up)*
- 11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us!”
- 12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’
- 13 **“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (Watch therefore — STAY AWAKE!)**

Those who were ready! Prepared! Mature!

FRUIT FOR HARVEST.

Not just “aware” of Jesus’ return — BUT FRUITFUL!

We can’t afford to coast ... to be at ease. To be complacent and self-satisfied.

We shouldn’t “put off” what needs to be done. For some vague time in the future. We don’t know when “our time is up”. The danger is: putting things off. Time is not necessarily on our side.

Luke 13:22-28

22 And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23 Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?”
And He said to them,

24 **“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**

25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open for us,' and **He will answer and say to you, I do not know you**, where you are from,'

26 then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'

27 But He will say, '**I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.**' (You who practise *unrighteousness*)

28 There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, **and yourselves thrust out.**

Strive — put out effort. Discipline. WHILE THE DOOR IS OPEN! The door is not open for ever. Once it's closed — it's too late!

And just knowing about Jesus ... about God's ways — isn't good enough.

Luke 12:15-21

15 And He said to them, "**Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.**"

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

17 And **he thought within himself**, saying, '**What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?**'

18 So he said, '**I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.**

19 And **I will say to my soul**, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; **take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.**" "

20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

21 "**So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.**"

This person was self-centred and assumed he had all of the time in the world. He was comfortable and at ease.

We need to be maturing and fruitful NOW — TODAY! We need to be ready — all of the time.

Revelation 19:6-9

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

7 **Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”**

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he said to me, “Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

The Bride of Christ has made herself ready. Prepared to be Jesus’ wife and partner. Mature and fruitful.

Physically ... many couples prepare for their weddings. Date ... venue ... guests ... garments ... the bride might want to lose weight (!) ... have her hair done all fancy ... etc.

They don’t just turn up.

Biblical analogies — maturity ... being fruitful ... harvests ... weddings. We all need to be preparing ... growing ... seeking to be fruitful and mature.

Not lazy ... complacent ... letting our time run away.

2 Peter 1:2-11

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

3 **as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,**

4 **by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, (enabling us to share in God’s nature)** that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

5 **But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,**

6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

These are some great qualities ... or fruit ... to have in our lives.

Verse 10: BE EVEN MORE DILIGENT!

Other translations say:

- Be more zealous
- Be all the more eager
- Make every effort

We can't just let the years "come and go"!

We are striving for a crown of righteousness — which is not available to the complacent.

Romans 13:8-14

8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13 **Let us walk properly**, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

14 **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**

Knowing the time (season). The end of the age is getting closer.

Jesus' return is nearer. Our judgment is nearer.

When the Father looks at us ... at our judgment ... will He find us mature and fruitful?

How are we doing? Are we progressing well ... confident? Seeing evidence of maturity?

If not ... when might we get around to taking some action?

Don't forget there's a time element. A time coming when that door will be shut.

Carpe Diem — Seize the day!! No time like today! Start today!